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ABSTRACT

Instructional materials, bilingual programs, and developments in second language learning research and methodology are discussed, primarily in terms of their implications for ethnic schools. The rationale is given for an ongoing analysis of instructional materials for ethnic bias, and a few examples of positive treatment of ethnicity from current elementary school textbooks are noted. Following a brief outline of four types of language programs, some aspects of the research in second language learning and methodology are discussed in terms of their application to teaching in ethnic schools. Nine pertinent elements from guidelines prepared by professional organizations for foreign language teachers are synthesized. Finally, suggestions on the use of songs, role playing and games, and a short annotated list of instructional materials are provided. (AMH)

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BILINGUALISM IN AMERICAN EDUCATION - IMPLICATIONS FOR ETHNIC SCHOOLS

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APPROACHES TO BILINGUALISM IN THE AMERICAN EDUCATION

In 1898, Trond Bothne, who was then professor of Luther College, wrote:

> "Now the question no longer is: how shall we learn English so that we may take part in the social life of America and partake of her benefits; the big question is: how can we preserve the language of our ancestors here, in a strange environment, and pass on to our descendants the treasures which it contains?"[1]

Although Trond Bothne was not an isolated cry in the wilderness, there were others who shared his views and voiced them on numerous occasions, we know very well that the American society in general has not encouraged the maintenance and cultivation of languages other than English until recently. Some of the reasons for this tendency were:

1. the feeling that maintaining another language hinders progress in English
2. linking the idea of the Great American Dream with the melting pot and in a melting pot diverse parts are forced into a union and individual identity is ruined
3. superior attitudes among native speakers of English
4. the association of bilingualism with low intelligence.[2]

For many years, he who carried the stigma of Europe in his broken accent and ways of living was considered an incomplete American. He had only managed to climb halfway up the beach because his ties to the Old World kept him from completely embracing the new way of life.[3]

Ethnics in Instructional Materials

Recently, however, there has been a resurgence of ethnic activities on national, state, and local levels. In education, the teaching of ethnic studies is considered a "must". Educators are being encouraged to implememt a kind of ethnic consciousness and ethnic awareness in the young adult of junior and senior high schools. Very recently elementary school children are beginning to learn about contributions made by ethnic groups that make up America. The recognition and strengthening of cultural pluralism are considered among the educators as both-- democratic and professional responsibility. It has been emphasized more and more frequently that especially for those who have cultural roots beyond the land of their citizenship, intercultural awareness and understanding are necessities. Along with this refreshing thought, teachers' attitudes as well as the instructional materials are undergoing a welcome change. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development has set for itself the task to analyze instructional materials for ethnic bias, whether bias is intentional or unintentional. Consequently, curriculum directors, supervisors and publishers are joining with writers and developers of teaching materials to emphasize the contributions from each of the many groups that make up the United States. They are emphasizing diversity as an aspect of the unity needed in American society.[4]

More and more, instructional materials that are being used in the elementary and secondary classroom as well as in the college situation today deal with both aspects of ethnicity:

1. emotional and attitudinal, which concern itself with presenting the minorities in a positive light;

2. those that impart factual knowledge, history, biography, art of ethnic groups.

Spanish, French, Slavic names are used for characters in the reading stories and other instructional materials. With the 1975 elementary Macmillan reading series comes a collection of stories in a booklet entitled: Amigos.[5] Rico is the name of the good guy in the booklet Colors.[6] Growing[7], another collection of readings contain the story: "Trina and Maggie". Trina happens to be a Mexican American who has moved with her family to a little Wyoming town. She wants to be friends with her classmates. "When Trina speaks Spanish, her words flow out, but when she tries to talk to Maggie in English, nothing comes out right.." There is immediately a great deal of emotional empathy aroused in the heart of the reader for Trina and her family. Even the science books reflect a great deal of ethnic awareness. The chapter "Learning to Learn" in the Spaceship Earth. Life Science[8], the story begins with the following names: "Miguel and Melanie went to Miguel's flat roof top every day ..".

Types of Bilingual Programs

Out of the emphasis on the ethnic awareness emerged a concept of bilingual education. There are several types of programs which have received attention over the last twenty years:

a. Foreign language teaching on the elementary, secondary, and college levels;

b. Teaching of English as a second language English is taught intensively in order that students with a different first language may better receive school instruction in English.

In the past these two programs received much support from the general public, from the philo tropic foundations and from the Federal Government through the National Defense Education Act of 1958. They are bilingual only in a sense that two languages are involved in teaching and learning.

c. A third program more closely represents bilingualism. It involves teaching of some school subjects in the non-English speaking child's first language until the learner achieves enough mastery of English to study in English. In some instances various subjects are taught in both languages. This type of bilingual program received much support from the Bilingual Education Act of 1967 and 1974.9

d. To these three types of bilingual programs the fourth one should be added. This is: Teaching of the child's first or native language in ethnic group schools. Ethnic schools have been least supported by the Federal Government and general public. They thrived mostly because of the strong motivation of ethnic communities' leaders and because of devotion of parents and students. Ethnic schools have always represented the strongest vitality of non-English speaking groups within the American society. It is hoped that these schools will continue to grow and improve in their contributions of ethnic and linguistic knowledge to the cultural life of our country.

Today even the social scientists agree that language and languages are the indispensable vehicle of human communication.

Anything that can be done to encourage and spread their study should have social value. Consequently, all aspects of bilingual education, including ethnic group schools help to preserve the language resources - a true national treasure.

APPLICATION OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING TO THE TEACHING IN ETHNIC SCHOOLS

Abilities to Learn the Second Language

According to Mario Pei, professor of Romance Philology, at Columbia University, three faculties are involved in language learning. Two of these are inherited, while the third one is a matter of a personal choice.

The first of these is the ability to hear accurately and to reproduce the sounds heard. The second inherited faculty necessary for the learning of a language is the ability of the brain to link the sounds and sequences of sounds to certain meanings. (IQ) The third element that needs to be present in language learning is motivation or interest in what someone is doing or want to do.[10]

Research studies show that in the second language learning attitudinal and motivational factors are as important as mental ability per se in determining success. Research studies also show that a language learner without aptitude can learn a second language with relative ease if his attitudes are positive and his motivation is strong. Within limits, favorable attitudes and high interest may compensate for possible defficiencies of the innate abilities.[11]

Since the language teacher can not change the inborn disposition of the learners, he or she has to see to it that the proper motivation is provided and that the best suitable methods are used to sustain the interest.

Language Learning Methodology

There have been various approaches to second language learning over the years. Traditional instruction was dedicated mostly to the teaching of reading approached through the study of grammar. Grammar was taught deductively. A grammatical rule would be stated; sentences illustrating the rule came next; then the rule would be applied by translating English sentences into the second language using terms given in the lesson.

In the early 1950's especially after Sputnik, it became a matter of national self interest to increase the number of Americans who understand and speak a foreign language. The dominant emphasis became language for communication. The United States Army who needed language specialists started experimenting with the audio-lingual techniques in its language schools. Because of the success of the Army method of teaching modern foreign languages, the new audio-lingual approach became the dominant techniques in the American elementary, secondary and post-secondary schools. It was paralleled by advances in linguistic and psycholinguistic fields. The theory underlying this "new key" techniques, as it became later known, is that language consists basically and essentially of sounds, of human oral communication among the ordinary people. Therefore, in teaching and learning a second language, practice in hearing and speaking should come first. The order of learning the language skill is a progression from listening to speech patterns to active speaking, reading, and writing.

Since the language learning is a process of attaining definite speech habits there should be plenty of opportunity for studying structual patterns. Less time should be devoted to the study of isolated words and grammar analysis. Grammar is by no means discarded, but the emphasis is on practicing it rather than discussing it. A basic assumption of this method has been that students would not only be able to understand and speak the second language but would eventually achieve skills in reading and writing superior to that of students trained by traditional method.

The audio-lingual teaching method and with it the invaluable electronic devices are widely used in schools today. Tape recorders, language laboratories, programmed instruction teaching aids, instructional television contribute greatly to the success of the "new key".[12]

In view of these developments, the Modern Language Association, the Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages, the Center for Applied Linguistics, as well as other professional associations came up with recommendations for the teachers of foreign languages. The MLA claims that the guidelines were prepared on the basis of opinions of many language teachers as well as linguists and thus represent the distillation of knowledge about the state of the art.[13] The following elements were synthesized from the statements of these organizations because they seem to be especially pertinent to the teaching in ethnic schools.

1. Any intelligent student can learn a second language provided that are present: hard work, a good teacher who motivated him and good linguistically sound instructional materials which sustain the learners interest.

2. Learning a second language will make learning another foreign language easier. This should be a strong motivation factor in ethnic schools.

3. Learning a second language means learning a system of habits which must be acquired to the point of automatic production of words and their meanings. . . a little like learning to play a musical instrument. Therefore, it is important to practice and practice. Practice should be intensive in school and at home, to one self silently and out loud to the teacher and classmates.

4. Involve as much as possible all senses when teaching and learning a language. The linguists maintain that the more numerous kinds of associations that are made to an item, the better are learning and retention. Seeing an object, touching it, tasting it, or hearing, will help students to remember the words, the names for that object. Numerous experiments show that language learning is most effective when words meaning concrete objects and physical actions are associated with actual motor activities involving those objects and actions. Thus, the elementary student learns the meaning of the foreign language word "skip" by actually skipping. He or she learns the meaning of the word

spoon by handling one or at least seeing one or seeing the picture of a spoon. This way the content of a foreign phrase is linked to its object or action and not to its English translation.

5. Since in the learning of a language - hearing and speaking are considered primary skills, and reading and writing are among secondary skills, it makes sense to first learn to speak the language. Reading and writing are then learned more easily. One can not learn to read without using some kind of pronunciation, even if it is a silent one which he or she improvises.

6. In the early stages of instruction, one should read out loud only what has been previously learned. Later, when reading new materials silently, the student should underline new words, pronounce new phrases by himself and with the teacher, return to the underline words, pronounce them again in isolation and in their contexts.

7. A helpful strategy in learning the second language is to avoid making direct comparisons between it and the language. Language should start with a thought. Therefore students should be trained to link the thought concept with the language he or she is learning and not with the concept of the student's language. Thus, thinking in the second language is encouraged and expanded.

8. Translations back and forth between the foreign language and the native language should be avoided. Translation

is a special skill which requires special training. Therefore, translation is used only in advanced stages. "Its special purpose is to relate two languages which are already well known to the student, and to have him or her comment on what is gained or lost or changed in translating from the second language to English. Translation should never be used as a word for word matching game."[14]

9. English translation of phrases and words should not appear in the instructional materials intended for the use of the student. This practice would call attention to the English equivalents of words and phrases and would detract from learning the second language words.[15]

A Few Practical Tips

1. Singing of songs in the second language provides excellent exercise in pronunciation, as well as a convenient way of memorizing both, words and phrases. This devise in one of the favorites of the ethnic group language schools as well as the foreign language clubs in schools and colleges.

2. Role playing and creative dramatics are also good aids in teaching second language especially in ethnic schools. Role playing enriches reinforcement of the basic pattern. When students speak the lines of another character, they loose their self consciousness and speak out freely. The listeners grow in the ability to understand spoken language. As a result, there is a confidence and ease incorporated into the language classroom which greatly motivates further language learning.

3. Games and riddles incorporate rhythm and rhyme and utilize elements of repetition and association which add charm and vitality to language learning.

Instructional Materials

Methods of teaching languages are reflected in the multitude of textbooks and other instructional materials which are available today. A small sampling of the materials, which are not necessarily most representative and which incorporate the principles and theories described above are the following series:

English Around the World[15]

Skillbook, display cards, activity books, teacher's guidebook, posters - all complement and supplement one another in order to provide a great variety of activities to stimulate learning English as the second language.

German Today[16]

Textbook, writing exercises and tapes follow audio-lingual method. Directions only are in English; there are no other comparisons between German and English.

Je lis, tu lis ..[17]

Written completely in French this colorfully illustrated text is intended for the elementary school French classes.

Auf Deutsch Bitte[18]

Completely German texts with tapes were written with the purpose of preparing the student to communicate effectively. Directions for exercises are in German. There is a German-English dictionary at the end of the texts.

La Dica in Italiano[19]

Italian texts with accompanying tapes were prepared with the purpose to enable student to communicate in Italian and to use Italian in social and working situations. English is not used at all within the text, there is, however, a grammatical summary and an Italian-English glossary at the end of each book.

Hablemos en Espanol[20]

Action and conversation oriented series, it is written completely in Spanish with English-Spanish grammatical summary and vocabulary at the end of the texts.

Let's Play Games in Spanish[21]

It is a collection of games, skits and teacher aids for kindergarten through grade 8.

Cambridge Latin Course[22]

Each unit contains a teacher's handbook with instruction in English, a series of pamphlets each dealing with a different topic in Latin only, a vocabulary pamphlet in English-Latin, a set of slides and a cassette. The program is designed to teach comprehension of the Latin language and to develop an understanding, style and values of Roman civilization.

Finding instructional materials appropriate to learners of a second language is a fundamental task of bilingual education. This is especially true for the teaching in ethnic schools because materials have to be in most instances prepared by individual teachers. There is an increasing trend in all subject disciplines taught on the elementary and secondary levels toward the use of multiple textbooks as opposed to the use of a single textbook. The decrease of a single textbook including a complete program with instructions, definitions, examples, and exercises is projected to continue with force over the next decade or so. It seems that in ethnic schools the variable-length mini-courses would be especially effective. They could deal with individual topics, such as basic grammar, intensive reading of poetry or topics related to culture, as national holidays, short history, etc. These mini-courses would have to be accompanied by proper short written material as well as the audio-visual aids.

Conclusion

During the 1976-77 school year, the National Textbook Company, a major publisher of the instructional foreign language materials, commissioned a research firm to conduct a study in regard to the education trends occuring within the field of MLA. Nearly 600 MLA supervisors were surveyed. According to the results of the survey the following increasing trends were observed, which can have a bearing on the teaching in ethnic schools.

1. Emphasis on attaining conversation and comprehension needed as a tourist or a resident.
2. Emphasis on the study of lifestyles, customs, and culture in the target language countries.
3. Use of audio-visual materials.
4. Greater eclecticism in foreign language courses, using mini-courses, special modules, multiple texts, literary works, second language newspapers, magazines, films, etc. and decline of a single textbook.[23]

A lesson learned from a survey? Learning and teaching a second language is hard work especially so in the ethnic school situations. This does not mean that the bitter medicine that goes with it should not be sugar coated a bit. Varied and and interesting instructional materials and linguistically sound methods will motivate the student and ensure effective teaching and learning.

John Foster Dallas has been quoted as saying:

"It is not possible to understand what is in the minds of other people without understanding their language, and without understanding their language, it is impossible to be sure that they understand what is on our minds."[24]

It is in the spirit of this language connection that this article was prepared.

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